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LETTER DATED 14 DECEMBER 1998 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to inform you about developments regarding my mission of good offices in Cyprus since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1179 (1998) on 29 June 1998.

On 25 and 30 September 1998, I met in New York with Glafcos Clerides and Rauf Denktash, respectively. At those meetings, I suggested that my Deputy Special Representative for Cyprus Dame Ann Hercus, begin a process of on-island talks with both parties with a view to reducing tension and promoting progress towards a just and lasting settlement. Both leaders expressed their support for such a process and promised to cooperate with it in a constructive and flexible manner.

On 16 October 1998, my Deputy Special Representative began a sequence of confidential meetings with both leaders. Both sides agreed that these "shuttle talks" would involve three clusters of problems: reduction of tension, core issues and humanitarian/goodwill issues. During the past eight weeks, there have been numerous meetings, as well as consultations with representatives of Greece and Turkey.

I am encouraged by the constructive manner in which both Mr. Clerides and Mr. Denktash are engaging in these talks. I also consider it positive that both leaders have respected the confidentiality of the talks. Both sides have made clear their commitment to avoiding tension, building peace in Cyprus and the region, and achieving an overall settlement of the Cyprus problem by peaceful means. While each leader faces the difficult responsibility of representing in this process the views and aspirations of his side only, they have a joint responsibility for a concrete, mutually acceptable and forward-looking solution.

Now, when the talks are still in progress, the flexible approach by both sides provides hope for tangible progress in achieving the above-mentioned objectives. The elements which are being discussed include, among others, a commitment to reject the use of force or the threat of use of force; a commitment to the prevention of further expansion of military forces and armaments as well as the consequent principle of substantial reciprocal reductions; and a confirmation of agreement to the United Nations Peace-keeping

Force in Cyprus package of measures aimed at reducing tension along the ceasefire lines and further possible steps, including demining.

It is the declared objective that, with the above commitments, both sides will also continue working with my Deputy Special Representative towards achieving agreement on the core aspects of a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. Mr. Clerides and Mr. Denktash have indicated their wish that my initiative should continue.

I welcome the progress achieved so far, which I believe is a significant contribution to the maintenance of peace and security in the region. I commend the two leaders for the statesmanship and vision which they are showing.

In view of the ongoing process, and in order not to jeopardize possible progress, I am urging both parties to promote a climate of reconciliation and genuine mutual confidence and, in particular, to avoid any actions which might increase tension, including by further expansion of military forces and armaments.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN